Public Humanities Summit at Princeton University on November 16 to Celebrate 50 Years of the National Endowment for the Humanities

PRINCETON, N.J. -- On November 16, 2015 at 4:30 pm, The Council of the Humanities at Princeton University will host NEH Chairman William D. Adams in a conversation with prominent humanities scholars and public humanities advocates. This event is co-sponsored with the Princeton Public Library, and the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.

The panel discussion will be held on the Princeton campus in 101 McCormick Hall, and is free and open to the public. A reception will follow at the Princeton University Art Museum.

Following a keynote address by Chairman Adams, the Chair of Princeton’s Council of the Humanities, Denis Feeney, Giger Professor of Latin, will moderate a discussion with university and community humanities advocates. They include Briann G. Greenfield, Executive Director of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities; Janie Hermann, Public Programming Librarian at the Princeton Public Library; Claudia L. Johnson, Murray Professor of English Literature at Princeton; James P. McClure, General Editor of the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, and David S. Magier, Associate University Librarian for Collection Development. Also participating from the Center for Digital Humanities at Princeton University are Meredith Martin, Director; Natalia Ermolaev, Project Manager; and Cliff Wulfman, Digital Initiatives Coordinator.

Topics will include the benefits of humanities funding for significant projects like the comprehensive edition of The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, also made available in electronic form; The Blue Mountain Project, a digital repository of avant-garde periodicals; and the Jane Austen Cults and Cultures Project. The importance of public humanities programming will also be highlighted.

William D. Adams is the tenth chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Created by the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act in September 1965, the National Endowment for the Humanities is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary.

A former president of Bucknell University in Pennsylvania and Colby College in Maine, Adams is a committed advocate for liberal arts education. He was nicknamed ‘Bro’ by his father in honor of a friend who died in World War Two. Adams’s own formal education was interrupted by three years of Army service, including one year in Vietnam. It was partly that experience, he says, that motivated him to study and teach in the humanities. “It made me serious in a certain
way (…) as a 20-year-old combat infantry advisor, I came face to face, acutely, with questions that writers, artists, philosophers: -- starting with, ‘What does it mean to be human?’”

Chairman Adams has advocated for the primacy of the humanities in American education and civic life. He notes, “People who engage in a profound way with a broad range of disciplines – including, and in some cases especially, with the humanities -- are preparing to engage the challenges of life. They are creative and flexible thinkers; they acquire the habits of mind needed to find solutions to important problems; they can even appreciate the value of making mistakes and changing their minds. I am convinced that this kind of study is not merely defensible but critical to our national welfare.”

About the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)
The National Endowment for the Humanities is one of the largest supporters of humanities programs in the United States, providing funding to strengthen teaching and learning in schools and colleges, to preserve and provide access to cultural and educational resources; to facilitate scholarship and research; and to create and advance opportunities for lifelong learning.

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. NEH grants have resulted in 7,000 books, nearly 2000 film and radio documentaries, and 29,000 research fellowships.

Just this month, the NEH announced the Next Generation Humanities Ph.D. grants program to identify ways to increase students’ exposure to multiple career paths and encourage collaboration with other departments or nonacademic institutions.

Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.

About The Council of the Humanities at Princeton University
Princeton’s Council of the Humanities, founded in 1953, is a crossroads for conversation, reflection, and collaborative research on the vast array of human experience. The Council fosters interdisciplinary work, offering grants for conferences, faculty seminars, and innovative, team-taught courses, as well as for scholarship that brings the humanities into dialogue with the arts, social sciences, sciences and technology. Each year the Council sponsor visits from eminent artists and writers, scholars and journalists. The Council is home to vibrant Humanistic Studies programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, to the Ferris McGraw Seminars in Journalism, and to more than a dozen interdisciplinary programs.
http://humanities.princeton.edu/